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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000662

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: SRSG DE MISTURA LAYS OUT UNAMI'S IMMEDIATE  
PRIORITIES

Classified By: PMIN Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) In his March 9 debrief of his recent trip to Washington, SRSG Staffan de Mistura told the Charge that he plans to use the political capital he's gained after the successful elections to advance the UNAMI agenda on Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs). The UN seeks close support from the U.S. on this process, as well as with efforts to assist refugees returning to Iraq in 2009. UNAMI also estimates that up to 500,000 refugees may seek to return to Iraq in 2009 and assisting refugees is UNAMI's second priority. De Mistura commented on a possible successor to take his place later this year.

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A Good Reception in New York and Washington  
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¶2. (C) Meeting with the Charge on March 9, Special Representative of the Secretary General Staffan De Mistura reported that he had a very good reception during his trip to the U.S., both at the UN Security Council in New York, and in Washington, DC. He reported that senior UN and U.S. officials seem relieved that Iraq's provincial elections went so smoothly. He sensed that the UNSC and others in DC had been worried about an implosion in Iraq around the elections, and so they were all the happier with the relative success. De Mistura appreciated the many accolades, but said that they also worried him. He warned that the outcome of the provincial elections does not mean "mission accomplished."

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A UN-US Coordinated Message on DIBS  
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¶3. (C) De Mistura identified the effort to address Iraq's Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) as UNAMI's top priority. The SRSG senses the timing is good now, as the UN has gained credibility after the provincial elections to pursue difficult issues. In his view, the DIBs process needs to proceed in a manner that allows parties to save face. This is what UNAMI seeks to achieve with the release of the UNAMI DIBs reports sometime next month. He cautioned that the recommendations on DIBs will displease all of the parties, and the UN will be criticized. But UNAMI officials want to use the reports to establish a process - De Mistura called it a "container" - to keep the Arabs and Kurds busy in a process to avoid violence. If recommendations in these reports are rejected, then UNAMI could keep engaging the parties to submit additional suggestions toward finding solutions. De Mistura said that the UN wants to achieve progress before U.S. forces draw down next year.

¶4. (C) During this discussion, SRSG De Mistura was clear: UNAMI will need USG support when the DIBs reports are released. He wants a closely coordinated position between

UNAMI and the U.S., but with the UN clearly in the lead. He specifically mentioned that they will need U.S. help to assuage Prime Minister Maliki who has not been enthusiastic about the UNAMI mission preparing reports about the final status of the territories disputed with the Kurdish Regional Government. De Mistura said he would also want the U.S. to encourage the Kurds to be reasonable. The UN, De Mistura added, cannot persuade the two sides by itself. The Charge and PMIN indicated that they understood this point, and that the Embassy would coordinate with UNAMI.

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UNAMI Positioning to Assist Iraqi Refugees  
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15. (C) On refugees, UNAMI estimates that up to 500,000 Qrefugees may seek to return in 2009. De Mistura said assisting refugees to return to Iraq is UNAMI's second priority. The SRSG said the UN has its work cut out, noting that one challenge is Iraq's "charming but useless8 Minister of Displacement and Migration, Abd al-Samad Sultan. UNAMI is increasing UNHCR's presence on its country team, with 10-20 additional positions in Baghdad and in the regional offices. De Mistura praised President Obama's February 27 comments on the need for increased support for Iraqi refugees and refugee and IDP return; he said he looks forward to working with the U.S. on this matter.

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The Next SRSG?  
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16. (C) SRSG De Mistura noted that he will leave Iraq over the summer. He said he is helping the UN look for a good successor. De Mistura said that there are rumors that "a Swiss diplomat, a former ambassador to Tehran whom the USG might know" is under consideration, and that he would support this nomination. (Note: De Mistura demurred from giving us a name, but we think it is Tim Guldemann, a Swiss diplomat who served in Iran and Afghanistan in 1999-2004, during which time he also represented U.S. interests. Guldemann joined the Swiss foreign ministry in 1982 and has served in Cairo, Geneva, Bern, and Kosovo. Recently, he has taken leave from the foreign service to work at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva. End note.) De Mistura commended Guldemann's neutrality, his knowledge of the Shia mentality, his ability to speak Arabic, and his experience in representing U.S. interests in Tehran. He wants to make sure there is no gap in UNAMI leadership this summer, and with four months to plan, De Mistura added, "there is no excuse." BUTENIS